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'Emperor at home, king abroad': Legitimising authority in early modern East Asia

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Abstract

How did conflicting legitimation narratives in early modern East Asia coexist despite the tensions their mutually exclusive claims generated? Prevailing accounts understand authority to be legitimised through narratives emphasising hierarchical delegation or autonomous production. In practice, both existed simultaneously. Existing accounts in International Relations (IR) suggest conflicting legitimation narratives should produce instability at best and hostilities at worst. Yet conflicting narratives endured over the long term in this period. I argue conflicting legitimation narratives were performed by actors in early modern East Asia within separate locations, allowing contradictory claims around the nature of their authority to coexist. This is seen through the contemporaneous phrase *wài wáng nèi dì* or 'emperor at home, king abroad'. To demonstrate this, I introduce the segmentation of space as a concept. Producing an inside/outside dynamic, East Asian actors performed their authority through autonomously produced legitimation narratives inside while acknowledging hierarchically delegated narratives as the basis for authority outside. I identify this process of segmentation operating at both the state and the region level. Both early modern Japan and Vietnam demonstrate how East Asian thinking and practices on spatial organisation were adapted across all levels of the system. Thus, conflicting legitimation narratives could endure without converging on shared understandings.

Keywords: historical Asian IR; authority; legitimacy; space; order; performance

Introduction

How did conflicting legitimation narratives in early modern East Asia coexist despite the tensions their mutually exclusive claims generated? For International Relations (IR), legitimising authority forms the basis for understanding political order in this period. Considering the importance of knowing where authority derived for stability, mutually exclusive narratives should produce instability at best and conflict at worst. Comparable examples such as the *Zweikaiserproblem* ('Problem of Two Emperors') in medieval Europe highlight the destabilising effect of conflicting legitimation narratives across a system.[1] Yet such narratives were continually performed throughout East Asia despite contradicting. An explanation for their endurance has not been put forward.

[1]Werner Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem im früheren Mittelater: die Bedeutung des byzantinischen Reiches für die Entwicklung der Staatside in Europa* (Hildesheim: A. Lax, 1947).

Prevailing accounts focus on hierarchical narratives legitimising authority in historical East Asia. Some emphasise culture producing shared understandings of rank.[2] Others emphasise power in establishing this relationship.[3] Increasingly, both are treated as inseparable to legitimising authority.[4] Other accounts highlight autonomous narratives legitimising authority domestically. Actors drew on local beliefs or appropriate shared culture to construct legitimation narratives agnostic to others.[5] Both narratives should not coexist considering historical East Asia's well-documented anxieties over status and rank. Consequently, their continued performance suggests actors could manage contradictions.

Rather than an 'either–or' approach, I forward a 'both–and' explanation. Actors managed interactions which allowed conflicting legitimation narratives for authority to endure without open acknowledgement. This paper argues conflicting legitimation narratives were performed by actors in early modern East Asia within separate locations, allowing mutually exclusive claims around authority to coexist. In doing so, difficult questions over where authority derived and consequent status and rank could be avoided. This reduced potential for conflict. I observe an underexplored spatial dimension, identifying the physical locations in which conflicting legitimation narratives were performed and where they were absent. It reflects the contemporaneous phrase *wài wáng nèi dì* or 'emperor at home, king abroad', which demonstrates historical East Asian political thought acknowledging such contradictions. Originating in the relationship between Han China and the Nanyue kingdom, the *Shiji* records Nanyue's rulers styling themselves 'emperor' despite formal rebuke from the Han, only using 'king' when dispatching envoys to China.[6] Despite mutually exclusive claims, this dynamic recurred throughout East Asia's history.

This article introduces the segmentation of space to explain how conflicting legitimation narratives are managed. Observable in thought and practice across early modern East Asia, segmentation describes how actors employed spatial organisation allowing hierarchically delegated and autonomously produced legitimation narratives to operate within different physical locations by managing interactions between them. Mutually exclusive claims on the basis for legitimate authority produced an inside/outside dynamic. Autonomously produced narratives were tolerated provided they remain inside and not contradict hierarchically delegated narratives performed outside. Both state- and region-level actors engaged in segmentation across East Asia's system, forming an organising principle managing conflicting legitimation narratives. To demonstrate this, I employ early modern Japanese and Vietnamese actors to highlight East Asian thinking and practices around space as an organising principle internationally. This demonstrates conflicting legitimation narratives enduring without reconciling contradictory understandings.

Two contributions are made to existing debates. First, it demonstrates conflicting legitimation narratives being performed indefinitely due to their contextual nature. This departs from 'organised

[2]Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan's Encounter with European International Society* (London: Routledge, 2009); David C. Kang, *East Asia before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Yongjin Zhang and Barry Buzan, 'The tributary system as international society in theory and practice', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 5:1 (2012), pp. 3–36.

[3]Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Yuan-kang Wang, *Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[4]Feng Zhang, *Chinese Hegemony: Grand Strategy and International Institutions in East Asian History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015); Joseph MacKay, 'The nomadic other: Ontological security and the Inner Asian steppe in historical East Asian international politics', *Review of International Studies*, 42:3 (2016), pp. 471–91.

[5]Inho Choi, '"Chinese" hegemony from a Korean *shi* perspective: Aretocracy in the early modern East Asia', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 22:3 (2022), pp. 347–74; Ji-Young Lee, *China's Hegemony: Four Hundred Years of East Asian Domination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

[6]'*Shi ji* 10: The basic annals of Emperor Wen the Filial', in Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Han Dynasty I*, trans. Burton Watson, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 285–310 (pp. 305–6); '*Shi ji* 113: The account of Southern Yue', in Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Han Dynasty II*, trans. Burton Watson, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 207–18 (p. 210).

hypocrisy' focusing on contradictions between rhetoric and action.[7] Segmentation demonstrates actors engaging in spatial organisation to accommodate performances of authority within distinct spaces without consensus over the basis for legitimation. It contrasts with contemporary tensions wherein only expressions of state sovereignty are considered legitimate, and conflicting efforts by non-state actors are marginalised. This reflects a 'particular and historically limited set of practices and ideas about relations between place and power'.[8] Second, introducing spatial organisation continues moving historical Asian IR beyond hierarchy by reconciling hierarchically delegated and autonomously produced narratives within the same framework.

I proceed as follows. First, I review debates on the basis for legitimising authority. Second, I introduce the segmentation of space as a framework managing conflicting legitimation narratives through an inside/outside dynamic. Third, I conceptualise segmentation operating as an organising principle at the state and the region level internationally. Fourth, I outline East Asian thought and practice on the relationship between space and authority. Then, I demonstrate how Japanese and Vietnamese actors undertook segmentation. I conclude by highlighting research avenues.

Legitimising authority in early modern East Asia

In the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries in East Asia, conflicting legitimation narratives generated tensions. Within East Asian thought and practice, legitimising authority was central to relationships. Although challenged by Japan, investiture by China's emperor formed one basis for political legitimacy. These legitimation narratives perceived authority as universal and allowed no competitors. Investiture represented the performance of these legitimation narratives and confirmed the ranks of actors. Yet this does not capture the full picture. East Asian rulers drew as much on local contexts to construct legitimation narratives independent of, and often in contradiction with, relationships elsewhere. Barring Joseon, East Asian rulers styled themselves emperor or equivalent ranks. Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese dynasties performed legitimation narratives contradicting their relationship with China's emperor.[9] As acts of investiture were as important as receiving it, contradictions generated tension.[10] For example, the Qing response to the 1793 Macartney Mission prioritised complying with tributary symbolism to legitimise authority internally over flexibility in engaging Britain.[11] Contradictions threatened status and could not be ignored.

Research into legitimising authority in historical East Asia is divided into two camps – hierarchical delegation and autonomous production. Hierarchical delegation remains predominant in explaining how authority is legitimised. This reflects wider debates on authority in hierarchy.[12] Here, legitimation narratives formalise persistent, unequal authority relationships.[13] Contractual

[7] Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[8] Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 6–7.

[9] Ronald P. Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 83–90; Alexander Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 234–46; Kim Pusik, *The Silla Annals of the Samguk Sagi*, trans. Edward J. Schultz and Hugh H. W. Kang with Daniel C. Kane (Seongnam: The Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2012), pp. 260–1.

[10] Paul Musgrave and Daniel Nexon, 'Defending hierarchy from the moon to the Indian Ocean: Symbolic capital and political dominance in early modern China and the Cold War', *International Organization*, 72:3 (2018), pp. 591–626; Jorg Kustermans, 'Gift-giving as a source of international authority', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 12:3 (2019), pp. 396–8.

[11] David E. Banks, 'Fields of practice: Symbolic binding and the Qing defense of Sinocentric diplomacy', *International Studies Quarterly*, 63:3 (2019), pp. 546–57.

[12] Ayşe Zarakol, 'Theorising hierarchies: An introduction', in Ayşe Zarakol (ed.), *Hierarchies in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 5–6.

[13] Paul MacDonald, 'Embedded authority: A relational network approach to hierarchy in world politics', *Review of International Studies*, 44:1 (2018), pp. 128–50 (p. 128).

approaches highlight actors weighing costs and benefits before entering hierarchy.[14] Alternatively, 'compacts' centre cultural norms in legitimising hierarchical authority.[15] Increasingly, these are recognised as entwined.[16]

For historical Asian IR, Fairbank's tributary system centres investiture as the prevailing hierarchically delegated narrative. Focus is placed on China's vision of hierarchy which centred their emperor.[17] As Hendrik Spruyt argues, 'engaging in tribute provided a means of gaining mutual legitimation vis-à-vis other states, but particularly served rulers in acquiring internal legitimacy'.[18] Investiture did not compromise political autonomy, as David Kang highlights, but rather formalised ranks in a shared hierarchy by placing rulers under ritual suzerainty.[19] These narratives were adaptable, with Andrew Phillips and Joseph MacKay identifying Qing multivocality in employing local beliefs such as Buddhism and Islam.[20] Similarly, Seo-Hyun Park identifies domestic drivers as East Asian rulers engaged systemic hierarchies for legitimacy.[21] Even Yuan-kang Wang's account of power sustaining hierarchy acknowledges culture in legitimising authority.[22] While identifying hierarchical delegation as central to diplomacy, it overlooks conflicting legitimation narratives contradicting their authority claims.

Accounts focused on autonomous production highlight East Asia's rulers constructing legitimation narratives to support their authority claims. This reflects wider discussions on contesting hierarchy. Although dominant actors maintain their prerogative in legitimising authority, this process is negotiated, allowing intermediaries to operate autonomously.[23] Indeed, 'hegemons are not just order makers but also order takers'.[24] Contestation sees 'hard' revisions forcing changes or 'soft' approaches reforming existing institutional norms.[25] At its most extreme, actors invest themselves.[26] For example, Central Asian actors engage with the liberal order's economic institutions while simultaneously drawing on Chinese and Russian counter-institutions promoting 'traditional

[14]Katja Weber, *Hierarchy amidst Anarchy: Transaction Costs and Institutional Choices* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 3–4; David Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. xi; Hendrik Spruyt and Alexander Cooley, *Contracting States: Sovereign Transfers in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[15]John Hobson and J. C. Sharman, 'The enduring place of hierarchy in world politics: Tracing the social logics of hierarchy and political change', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11:1 (2005), pp. 63–98; G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012); Musgrave and Nexon, 'Defending hierarchy from the moon to the Indian Ocean'.

[16]Evelyn Goh, *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post–Cold War East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 10–11.

[17]John K. Fairbank and S. Y. Têng, 'On the Ch'ing tributary system', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 6:2 (1941), pp. 135–46; John K. Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).

[18]Hendrik Spruyt, *The World Imagined: Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic, and Southeast Asian International Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 85.

[19]Kang, *East Asia before the West*, pp. 56–7.

[20]Andrew Phillips, 'Making empires: Hierarchy, conquest and customization', in Ayşe Zarakol (ed.), *Hierarchies in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 43–65 (p. 49); MacKay, 'The nomadic other', p. 489.

[21]Seo-Hyun Park, *Sovereignty and Status in East Asian International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[22]Wang, *Harmony and War*, pp. 129–30.

[23]Michael Mastanduno, 'Partner politics: Russia, China, and the challenge of extending US hegemony after the Cold War', *Security Studies*, 28:3 (2019), pp. 479–504 (pp. 479–81).

[24]G. John Ikenberry and Daniel Nexon, 'Hegemony Studies 3.0: The dynamics of hegemonic orders', *Security Studies*, 28:3 (2019), pp. 395–421.

[25]Kai He, Huiyun Feng and Steve Chan et al. 'Rethinking revisionism in world politics', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 14:2 (2021), pp. 159–82 (pp. 161–2).

[26]Meghan Mcconaughey, Paul Musgrave, and Daniel H. Nexon, 'Beyond anarchy: Logics of political organization, hierarchy, and international structure', *International Theory*, 10:2 (2018), pp. 181–218 (pp. 197–8).

values' and 'civilizational diversity'.[27] Despite acknowledging conflicting legitimation narratives, their relationship has not been fully explored.

Throughout historical East Asia, actors drew on shared civilisational heritage and/or local contexts to construct legitimation narratives asserting equality. Ji-Young Lee highlights domestic contexts determining East Asia's rulers accepting Chinese investiture. Joseon's prioritisation of investiture to secure their king's legitimacy is contrasted against Ashikaga and Tokugawa Japan, wherein investiture undermined the shōgun's authority.[28] Inho Choi questions investiture's importance, pointing instead to sociocultural elites providing legitimation narratives for ruling dynasties.[29] Likewise, Colin Chia argues East Asia's cultural norms are better understood as repositioning social frames rather than accepting legitimation narratives recognising hierarchical authority. Despite offering tribute, Vietnamese and Siamese rulers asserted equality or superiority over China.[30] That these could be continually performed in conflict with hierarchically delegated narratives remains unexplored.

I expand on both by identifying spatial organisation as key to explaining how conflicting legitimation narratives are managed. While contradictory authority claims generated tension, East Asian actors distanced performances within distinct spaces. Both delegated and autonomous narratives are reconciled through arrangements allowing coexistence without convergence. Differences do not represent diverging explanations but rather existed within an order allowing conflicting legitimation narratives to be performed within discrete spaces. In the following section, I introduce the segmentation of space as the process facilitating an inside/outside dynamic.

Segmentation of space

In this section, I outline the segmentation of space. First, I identify space as the physical location in which actors perform legitimation narratives. Space is either de jure (formally recognised) or de facto (existing in practice) and constitutes an area wherein sociopolitical life occurs under the purview of a particular actor. Second, I describe segmentation. It refers to the process of distancing spaces by managing interactions between them. Actors achieved this by employing governance tools to dictate movement. Through this, actors organised space on two lines reflecting their authority claims – constructing legitimation narratives and imposing demands on behaviour. Third, I explain how segmentation manages conflicting legitimation narratives. Managing interactions allowed hierarchically delegated and autonomously produced narratives to coexist within different spaces. Fourth, I highlight low interaction capacity facilitating segmentation. Fifth, I describe the resulting inside/outside dynamic allowing actors to overlook contradictions. Sixth, I acknowledge maintaining segmentation proved difficult at times, producing liminal spaces that generated tension which required further management.

To begin, I define space. It represents a physical location wherein sociopolitical life occurs under the purview of a particular actor. This constitutes 'bordering, bounding, parcelization, [and] enclosure' of relations within a particular location.[31] It is not just 'a static container, but … the momentary outcome of social construction'.[32] As will be discussed later, segmentation constitutes the process demarcating space. While the imagined extent of authority claims could transcend physical

[27] Alexander Cooley, 'Ordering Eurasia: The rise and decline of liberal internationalism in the post-communist space', *Security Studies*, 28:3 (2019), pp. 588–613 (pp. 589–91).

[28] Lee, *China's Hegemony*, pp. 56–78.

[29] Choi, '"Chinese" hegemony from a Korean *shi* perspective', pp. 348–9.

[30] Colin Chia, 'Social positioning and international order contestation in early modern Southeast Asia', *International Organization*, 76:2 (2022), pp. 305–36 (p. 307).

[31] Bob Jessop, Neil Brenner, and Martin Jones, 'Theorizing sociospatial relations', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26:3 (2008), pp. 389–401 (p. 393).

[32] Daniel Lambach, 'Space, scale, and global politics: Towards a critical approach to space in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 48:2 (2022), pp. 282–300 (p. 283).

boundaries, performances are localised within a given space and rarely extend beyond. De jure spaces constitute formally recognised boundaries between and within actors akin to contemporary states and their subdivisions. De facto spaces exist in practice without formal recognition. Today, secessionists and non-recognised governments undertake spatial organisation in this manner. Stronger actors could enforce legitimation narratives against weaker counterparts. Nevertheless, this was destabilising, leading to a 'live and let live' approach. Intervention only occurred in exceptional circumstances. For example, Islamic State exercised authority over an area the size of Great Britain, challenging Iraq and Syria's recognised borders. Within, performances recognising their narratives claiming universal authority over the Islamic *ummah* were enforced. No formal recognition existed beyond.[33]

Next, I explain segmentation.[34] This distances spaces by managing contact between them. It dictates when, where, and how interactions occur within and between spaces. This allows for a 'conscious effort to slow down the pace of events or decisions, perhaps event to stretch, pause, or opt out of time (and even space), either literally or figuratively'.[35] Segmentation employs governance tools to control movement. Collecting tariffs, controlling the flow of goods through trade licences, external maritime controls, internal passports, taxation, and conscription represent such institutions. The extent actors can enforce these, whether de jure or de facto, distinguishes spaces. For example, passports permit and deny entry between their spaces based on state 'monopoly on movement'.[36] These governance tools are justified through prevailing narratives which through repeated performances legitimised authority claims and enabled segmentation.

To segment conflicting legitimation narratives, actors organise space on two lines. First, a legitimation narrative defining where authority derives and the logic of appropriateness for conduct is constructed within a space. While it does not recognise contradictory authority claims, neither does it challenge them. Second, demands on behaviour are imposed. Authority constitutes the ability 'to influence other actors and to direct their common affairs' and is recognised by aligning conduct with prevailing legitimation narratives.[37] Here, state- and region-level actors imposed and obeyed these practices across the system. Differences in material and ideological capabilities resulted in pattern decay. Those at higher levels prove more effective than lower-level counterparts.

Segmentation of space reconciles conflicting authority claims by allowing delegated and autonomous narratives to coexist despite tensions. Hierarchically delegated refers to narratives formally acknowledging authority deriving from another. Reflecting universal claims by the predominant actor, these were imposed through prevailing cultural scripts. Autonomously produced legitimation narratives are constructed at odds with these. Here, actors do not perform as a supplicant and may force those within their space to recognise their hierarchical claims. Legitimacy derives from local beliefs or repurposing cultural scripts and reflects larger discussions on hierarchy's contested nature.[38] Indeed, where segmentation could not be fully implemented, managing conflicting legitimation narratives became difficult. Considering the tensions this produced, its

[33]Haroro J. Ingram and Devorah Margolin, 'Inside the Islamic State in Mosul: A snapshot of the logic & banality of evil', *The ISIS Files* (2020), pp. 7–11.

[34]Previously, Donnelly had used segmentation to refer to horizontal differentiation cutting across rank distinctions in IR. My account uses the term in a different capacity. Jack Donnelly, 'Rethinking political structures: from "ordering principles" to "vertical differentiation" – and beyond', *International Theory*, 1:1 (2009), pp. 49–86 (p. 71).

[35]Jack L. Amoureux, 'Is faster better? Political and ethical framings of pace and space', *International Theory*, 12:2 (2020), pp. 163–88 (p. 175).

[36]John Torpey, 'Coming and going: On the state monopolization of the legitimate "means of movement"', *Sociological Theory*, 16:3 (1998), pp. 239–59 (pp. 239–42).

[37]Jorg Kustermans and Rikkert Horemans, 'Four conceptions of authority in International Relations', *International Organization*, 76:1 (2022), pp. 204–28 (pp. 206–7).

[38]Shogo Suzuki, 'The agency of subordinate polities: Western hegemony in the East Asian mirror', in John M. Hobson and Leonard Seabrooke (eds), *Everyday Politics of the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 177–95; Mcconaughey, Musgrave, and Nexon, 'Beyond anarchy', pp. 197–8.

importance is seen in containing contradictions to specific locations. Thus, conflicting legitimation narratives could be performed without converging on shared understandings.

Although segmentation is an active strategy, structural considerations shape its viability. Interaction capacity explains how segmentation 'hid' conflicting legitimation narratives. Barry Buzan and Richard Little define this as 'the amount of transportation, communication, and organizational capability … how much in the way of goods and information can be moved over what distances at what speeds and at what costs'.[39] Indeed, 'distance-demolishing technology of railroads and all-weather motor roads' facilitating movement did not exist.[40] Enforcing total compliance and eliminating conflicting legitimation narratives was impossible.[41] While historical East Asia was not isolationist, technological limitations extended travel times, leaving movement between countries taking several months to a year. Geographical barriers raised travel costs and limited the frequency of movement. Low interaction capacity distanced actors, allowing them to overlook conflicting legitimation narratives.

Through segmentation an inside/outside dynamic is created.[42] Here, autonomous legitimation narratives are overlooked inside while hierarchically delegated narratives are recognised outside. Segmentation keeps conflicting performances of authority separate and ensures open acknowledgement is avoided. If 'we see perception as a form of contact and communion, then control over what is perceived is control over contact that is made, and the limitation and regulation of what is shown is a limitation and regulation of contact'.[43] Situating legitimation narratives in distinct spaces reframes understandings of multivocal signalling.[44] Rather than only the hegemon legitimising relationships with subordinates on different standards, it reveals subordinate actors engaging in multivocal signalling. This reinforces why conflicting legitimation narratives operated on an inside/outside dynamic – their effectiveness derives from actors overlooking contradictions and ensuring performances are displayed before select audiences by managing interactions between spaces. Asymmetries in capabilities and the tensions resulting from contradictions meant autonomous narratives could only be performed inside to avoid openly challenging prevailing delegated narratives outside. Contradictions could be overlooked in historical East Asia as embassy and trade missions represented infrequent methods for communication and were localised to chosen sites. Similarly, internal passports restricted movement and held populations in specific locations and dictated what was seen and conveyed. Thus, segmentation's inside/outside dynamic reinforces the contextual nature of legitimation narratives.

Difficulties in maintaining segmentation create liminal spaces generating tension. Liminal spaces comprise areas wherein several actors employ governance tools over the same area. While not a prominent feature in the system, it reveals how segmentation in practice cannot always operate consistently. Nevertheless, the presence of liminal spaces reinforces segmentation's importance to stability. Since liminality cannot exist without clarity, these 'practices often end up reinforcing the inside/outside distinction as they refuse to conform to it fully'.[45] Managing interactions becomes difficult as, while actors tolerate 'sharing' liminal spaces, performances of legitimation

[39]Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 80.

[40]Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States AD 990–1992* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992); James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 45.

[41]Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, p. 4.

[42]R. B. J. Walker provides the most prominent account of an inside/outside dynamic in IR. Nevertheless, my paper employs this term in a different capacity. R .B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[43]Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Anchor Doubleday: New York, 1967), p. 67.

[44]Daniel Nexon and Thomas Wright, 'What's at stake in the American empire debate', *American Political Science Review*, 101:2 (2007), pp. 253–71 (pp. 259–61).

[45]Dylan Loh and Jaakko Heiskanen, 'Liminal sovereignty practices: Rethinking the inside/outside dichotomy', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 55:3 (2020), pp. 284–304 (p. 289).

Table 1. Overview of the levels on which an inside/outside dynamic operates allowing for the segmentation of authority claims in the early modern East Asian system.

Spatial Level	Inside	Outside
State	**Legitimation narrative –** Authority expressed autonomously, contradicting, or repurposing, systemic normative standards.	**Legitimation narrative –** Authority expressed along delegated lines which recognise systemic normative standards as the basis of legitimacy.
	Demands on behaviour – Control over movement recognises autonomous authority. Taxation and conscription constrain actors at lower levels.	**Demands on behaviour –** Compliance with systemic normative standards. Recognition of predominant actors' authority in system.
Region	**Legitimation narrative –** Authority expressed autonomously, asserting equality to states through alternate ideologies or normative standards.	**Legitimation narrative –** Authority expressed along delegated lines. Recognition of the state as the source of legitimate authority through investiture.
	Demands on behaviour – Emulates state-level actors, imposing taxation and conscription based on their autonomous authority.	**Demands on behaviour –** Interactions recognise state authority, control movement, and impose material costs to drain resources.

narratives conflict. This is seen in two areas. First, the visibility of boundaries influenced performances of legitimation narratives. Low interaction capacity did not make actors oblivious to contradictions. Conflicting legitimation narratives were never 'hidden' as much as overlooked due to tensions arising from acknowledging contradictions.[46] Clarity in distinguishing boundaries allowed actors to identify audiences capable of viewing performances within a particular space. Visible boundaries facilitated segmentation as actors understood who could view their performance. Conversely, non-visible boundaries required greater attention as to when, where, and how performances occurred as they lacked clarity around audiences capable of viewing them. Second, managing interactions within liminal spaces required greater coordination. Without a clear inside/outside distinction, curating micro-level interactions such as formal diplomatic rituals and day-to-day economic exchanges was essential to prevent conflicting legitimation narratives being performed simultaneously. Tensions arising from liminal spaces highlight the instability caused by conflicting legitimation narratives in the absence of segmentation.

Organising principle

Having explained how segmentation of space operated, this section outlines its role as an organising principle. While state and region levels represent ideal types, they nevertheless highlight recognisable sites of political activity. Both operated across the system, meaning performances of conflicting legitimation narratives needed management. While actor characteristics changed, this organising principle remains traceable across East Asia's history.

Table 1 outlines segmentation's inside/outside dynamic. As discussed, space is organised on two lines – constructing legitimation narratives and placing demands on behaviour. Both conveyed delegated and autonomous narratives on where authority derives inside and outside. First, constructing legitimation narratives defines the logic of appropriateness. Inside, the prevailing actor's authority claims are legitimised autonomously through their legitimation narratives – drawing on local beliefs or repurposing cultural scripts agnostic to understandings of appropriateness elsewhere. Contradictions were overlooked. Outside, systemic normative standards formalised narratives that authority was hierarchically delegated from the predominant actor, which marginalised competitors. Although recognition was avoidable, open challenges were rare.

[46] Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Behavior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 5–7.

Second, demands on behaviour entail controlling how actors conduct themselves within a space. Compliance with demands reflects a space's logic of appropriateness. Inside, actors acquiesce to demands when entering or inhabiting a space, including regulating movement, observing rituals, and being conscripted. Legitimation of these demands was based on narratives contradicting those outside. Thus, authority claims are recognised in practice irrespective of belief. Outside, demands on behaviour limited performances of conflicting legitimation narratives, although enforcement fluctuated.

State-level actors constructed legitimation narratives on their terms inside at odds with understandings existing outside. Ruling dynasties and sociocultural elites represent actors at this level. They inhabited spaces corresponding to contemporary understandings of a 'country'. Compared with region-level actors, boundaries were visible to others, as seen in their reciprocal willingness to abide by maritime restrictions and movement controls. Likewise, investiture's long history as a practice within East Asian diplomacy (irrespective of belief) demonstrates their recognition as distinct entities. Inside, autonomously produced legitimation narratives contradicted or repurposed cultural scripts to assert equality, if not primacy. Outside, hierarchically delegated legitimation narratives recognised the authority claims of the predominant actor and that their position derived from investiture.

Demands on behaviour reveal the extent to which state-level actors could enforce authority claims. Inside, controlling movement through maritime controls and internal passports compelled recognition of autonomously produced narratives. Furthermore, taxation and conscription constrained region-level actors and limited their ability to operate internationally.[47] This allowed interactions inside to enforce understandings of rank at odds with understandings of appropriateness outside. Outside, actors are expected to recognise prevailing standards and conduct themselves appropriately or lose legitimacy and risk potential intervention.[48]

Region-level actors constructed legitimation narratives independent of their relationship to state-level actors through segmentation. Actors at this level ranged from local elites appointed by the centre to strongmen making only nominal genuflections to existing rulers. They inhabited spaces ranging from formalised subdivisions within larger political structures to territories where authority was exercised beyond the capacity of rulers to prevent (or at the very least agnostic to their considerations). Despite limitations, region-level actors operated across the system with relative autonomy vis-à-vis the centre and maintained relations with other state-level actors. Legitimation narratives were performed due to the inability or unwillingness of state-level actors to intervene. Inside, autonomously produced narratives contradicted others by either asserting equality or overlooking relationships outside. Local beliefs or cultural scripts were appropriated to construct these legitimation narratives.[49] Outside, region-level actors' performances acknowledge their authority as being hierarchically delegated.

Demands on behaviour saw region-level actors enforce their understandings. Inside, their size allowed them to emulate governance tools. Although state-level actors recognised their autonomy, in practice this exceeded what had been delegated. More importantly, demands were justified using their own legitimation narratives and not in reference to those expressed by state-level actors. Outside, demands of state-level actors are complied with whether by nominally accepting investiture or by complying with movement controls, taxation, and conscription. These undercut performances of conflicting legitimation narratives.

Segmentation of space in early modern East Asia

Introducing a spatial dimension to understandings of early modern East Asia demonstrates how conflicting legitimation narratives are managed. While significant turmoil followed conflicts

[47] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, p. 40.
[48] Luke Glanville, 'Does R2P matter? Interpreting the impact of a norm', *Conflict and Cooperation*, 51:2 (2016), pp. 184–99.
[49] Suzuki, 'The agency of subordinate polities'.

such as the Imjin War (1592–8) and the Ming–Qing transition (1618–83), actors returned to both hierarchical and spatial practices when reestablishing order. Segmentation emerged as an organising principle when the Ming introduced the *haijin* ('sea ban') policy. Adapted across East Asia by state- and region-level actors, it disappeared in the 19th century as Western imperialism imposed their diplomatic standards. Despite segmentation's continuity, actors at the state and region level changed across this period. Therefore, legitimation narratives justifying authority claims evolved. As changes produced contradictions, segmentation maintained an inside/outside dynamic managing this. Here, I draw on Victoria Hui's argument that historical Asian IR should not just rely on political thought but also on historical practices to develop insights.[50]

East Asian political thought understood authority as universal and transcending spatial divisions. This is seen in the term *tianxia* ('all under heaven'). Denoting a universal conception of space, it emphasises that no one falls beyond heaven's authority.[51] Hendrik Spruyt contrasts *tianxia* against Westphalian ideas of a geographically defined sovereignty 'inside' and an 'outside' beyond this authority.[52] Liu Zehua's model of Chinese leadership stresses no 'temporal or spatial limits to the monarch's power' existed in conceiving their authority. While falling short of absolutism as sociocultural elites held significant power, authority could only be justified through reference to the Chinese emperor.[53] As Mencius states: 'There are not two Suns in the Heavens. The people do not have two Kings.'[54]

Other concepts reflect an inside/outside dynamic. The *hua–yi* (civilised–barbarian) distinction stratified actors based on their embrace of Chinese civilisation. However, East Asian polities rarely identified as 'barbarian' and expressed equality or superiority to 'China'.[55] Furthermore, Confucianism recognised contextuality in authority relationships. Thus, 'within the family, there is father and son; outside the family is ruler and minister'.[56] Mencius introduced the 'Five Constant Relationships', highlighting different obligations in authority between ruler to ruled, father to son, husband to wife, elder brother to younger brother, and friend to friend.[57] While considered universal, East Asian political thought recognised specific authority relationships having different obligations.

Practices in historical East Asia render segmentation observable through institutions controlling movement. Maritime restrictions established segmentation by dictating when, where, and how actors entered ports to conduct trade. While not central to existing accounts, IR acknowledges their role in incentivising recognition of hierarchy by linking access to tribute.[58] It originated with the Ming *haijin* policy in 1372 and continued under the Qing. This established a space reflecting a Chinese logic of appropriateness legitimising their authority irrespective of outside beliefs. While enforcement varied, the Hongwu Emperor's ban transformed the East Asian system by

[50]Victoria Hui, 'History and thought in China's traditions', *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 17:2 (2012), pp. 125–41.

[51]Zhao Tingyang, *All under Heaven: The Tianxia System for a Possible World Order*, trans. Joseph E. Harroff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), pp. 2–4.

[52]Spruyt, *The World Imagined*, p. 86.

[53]Liu Zehua, 'Monarchism: A historical orientation of Chinese intellectual culture', *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, 45:2–3 (2013), pp. 21–31 (p. 23).

[54]Mencius 'Book 5A4.1', in *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. Bryan W. Van Norden (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2008), pp. 121–2 (p. 121).

[55]H. Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), p. 24; Kathlene Baldanza, *Ming China and Vietnam: Negotiating Borders in Early Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 5–6; Jeong-Mi Lee, 'Chŏson Korea as Sojunghwa, the small central civilization: *Sadae kyorin* policy and relations with Ming/Qing China and Tokugawa Japan in the seventeenth century', *Asian Cultural Studies*, 36 (2010), pp. 305–18 (p. 306).

[56]Mencius, 'Book 2B2.4', in *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. Bryan W. Van Norden (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2008), pp. 51–2 (p. 51).

[57]Mencius, 'Book 3A4.8', in *Mengzi Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. Bryan W. Van Norden (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2008), p. 71.

[58]Kang, *East Asia before the West*, pp. 119–20; Zhang, *Chinese Hegemony*, p. 95; Lee, *China's Hegemony*, pp. 146–7.

linking trade to a tributary framework 'as an aspect of the universal ruler's ritual relations with the cosmos'.[59] Its emulation reflects a longer tradition of institutional borrowing and adaptation.[60] Furthermore, maritime restrictions extended to imposing demands on region-level actors. This prevented foreign collaboration, provided a cost-effective solution to piracy, restricted the outflow of bullion and precious metals, and enforced Confucian morality by curtailing the greed associated with trade.[61] During the Ming–Qing transition, edicts in 1661, 1664, and 1679 forcefully evacuated the coasts of Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangnan, and Shandong. Known as *Qiānjiè Lìng* (Great Clearance), it isolated the pro-Ming Kingdom of Tungning on Taiwan by depriving them of potential allies in southern China.[62] Here, the role of maritime restrictions in maintaining order beyond regulating trade become apparent.

Within countries, spatial interactions controlling movement helped maintain order. Requiring authorisation to move held populations in place to facilitate taxation and conscription. This limited region-level actors from operating in the wider system. The *hukou* system controlling movement was "among the oldest, longest-lasting Chinese political institutions" in operation for at least 2500 years.[63] Alternatively known as *xiangsui* or *baojia* ('mutual responsibility'), it represented an evolving household registration institution restricting internal migration for cohesion.[64] The *Guanzi* conveys this sentiment:

> Everyone must live in his home village, and within a village, no households are permitted that do not belong to it. Therefore those who would flee have no place to hide, and those who would shift about have no place to stay. Without seeking them, his people may be found; without summoning them, they arrive.[65]

Japan and Vietnam emulated these through the *koseki seido* and historical antecedents to the *hộ khẩu* systems respectively.[66] Enforcement varied depending on the effective capabilities of state-level actors. It was central to segmentation as it forced compliance with legitimation narratives. This allowed state-level actors to have their authority claims acknowledged even as region-level actors maintained contradictory relationships.

Having identified a spatial dimension in East Asian thought and practice, I demonstrate segmentation operating in early modern Japan and Vietnam. Rather than focus on China, I use East Asia's peripheral actors to showcase the emulation of spatial practices throughout the system to manage conflicting legitimation narratives. Alongside Confucianism, beliefs

[59] John D. Langlois, Jr, 'The Hung-wu reign, 1368–1398', in Frederick W. Mote and Denis C. Twitchett (eds), *The Cambridge History of China Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 107–81 (pp. 168–9); Frederick W. Mote, 'The Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih reigns, 1465–1505', in Frederick W. Mote and Denis C. Twitchett (eds), *The Cambridge History of China Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 343–402 (p. 396).

[60] Chin-Hao Huang and David C. Kang, *State Formation through Emulation: The East Asian Model* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[61] Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000–1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 90; Li Kangying, *The Ming Maritime Policy in Transition, 1368 to 1567* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), pp. 12, 24–5.

[62] James Hayes, 'The Hong Kong region: Its place in traditional Chinese historiography and principal events since the establishment of Hsin-An County in 1573', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, 14 (1974), pp. 108–135 (pp. 118–19).

[63] Fei-Ling Wang, *Organizing through Division and Exclusion: China's Hukou System* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 33.

[64] Tiejun Cheng and Mark Selden, 'The origins and social consequences of China's hukou system', *The China Quarterly*, 139 (1994), pp. 644–68 (p. 645); Wang, *Organizing through Division and Exclusion*, p. 34.

[65] Guan Zhong, *Guanzi: Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early China Volume Two*, trans. W. Allyn Rickett (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 223.

[66] David Chapman, 'Geographies of self and other: Mapping Japan through the Koseki', *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 9:29 (2011), pp. 1–10; Andrew Hardy, 'Rules and resources: Negotiating the household registration system in Vietnam under reform', *Sojurn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 16:2 (2001), pp. 187–212 (pp. 188–9).

including Daoism, Buddhism, and Shamanism constituted how authority could be legitimised.[67] Rather than wider Eurasia, I focus on the East Asian cultural sphere (China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam), which shared common ideas and practices. Historical connections and cultural scripts defining legitimate authority made actors sensitive to contradictions. Indeed, while Ming authority claims were broadly accepted, this did not extend to the Qing. As they were perceived as 'barbarians' due to their Manchu heritage, recognising their authority claims generated tensions.[68] This reiterates segmentation's importance to managing conflicting legitimation narratives.

Both Japanese and Vietnamese actors at the state and region level engaged in segmentation across the system. Erik Ringmar characterises Tokugawa Japan as an international system unto itself to describe relations between daimyō and the shōgun.[69] Furthermore, Japanese region-level actors held relations with China and Korea, challenging their formal relationship to the shogunate. Similarly, Vietnamese region-level actors operated as distinct polities. Lacking centralised authority, they were recognised as distinct actors across the system.[70]

I proceed as follows. First, I provide an overview of political thought and identify contextual understandings of an inside/outside dynamic. Second, I highlight actors at both levels acknowledging narratives confirming hierarchical delegation of their authority outside while performing autonomously produced narratives inside. Here, I identify the logic of appropriateness and demands on behaviour existing within spaces.

Japan

An inside/outside dynamic maintained Japanese cohesion. While performances of legitimation narratives recognised the shōgun delegating authority, segmentation enabled region-level actors to construct autonomous narratives. Both the Ashikaga and Tokugawa shogunates maintained complicated relationships with daimyō who retained significant autonomy. IR briefly highlights spatiality through the *sakoku* ('Closed Country') edicts asserting state control over foreign interactions.[71] Continual performances recognising shogunal authority through *sankin kōtai* ('alternate attendance') limited expressions of conflicting authorities by daimyō within their domains.[72] Nevertheless, borders maintained by daimyō reflected a territorial order centred on clear demarcation and mutual exclusion.[73] Finally, Hendrik Spruyt touches on *omote-uchi* ('surface-inside') to explain how contradictions were managed.[74] Japanese thought recognised an inside/outside dynamic. Situated identities were central to social cohesion and conflict resolution. Luke Roberts argues authority under the Tokugawa operated on two understandings. *Omote* ('surface' or 'interface') is the location of rituals confirming relationships between superior and inferior. *Uchi* ('inside') provides inferiors a location for independent authority. *Naishō* ('inside agreements')

[67]Evelyn S. Rawski, *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia: Cross-Border Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 105–7.

[68]Angela Schottenhammer, 'Japan: The tiny dwarf? Sino-Japanese relations from the Kangxi to the Qianlong reigns', *Asia Research Institute, Working Paper Series*, 106 (2008), pp. 1–53 (pp. 10–12); Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, p. 18; Yuanchong Wang, 'Civilizing the Great Qing: Manchu–Korean relations and the reconstruction of the Chinese Empire, 1644–1761', *Late Imperial China*, 38:1 (2017), pp. 113–21.

[69]Erik Ringmar, 'Performing international systems: Two East-Asian alternatives to the Westphalian order', *International Organization*, 66:1 (2012), pp. 1–25 (pp. 5–6).

[70]Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Liam C. Kelley, 'Taxation and military conscription in early modern Vietnam: Nguyễn Đàng Trong in comparative perspective', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 15:2 (2020), pp. 1–39 (p. 3).

[71]Kang, *East Asia before the West*, pp. 79–80.

[72]Ringmar, 'Performing international systems', pp. 5–6.

[73]Naosuke Mukoyama, 'The Eastern cousins of European sovereign states? The development of linear borders in early modern Japan', *European Journal of International Relations*, 29:2 (2023), pp. 255–82.

[74]Spruyt, *The World Imagined*, pp. 117–18.

represented confidential understandings never revealed in *omote* situations.[75] Related concepts such as *omote-ura* ('front-back') and *uchi-soto* ('in-out') reinforce authority's contextual nature within Japan.[76]

Outside, Japanese state-level actors utilised segmentation to avoid acknowledging hierarchical delegation. Japanese rulers rejected East Asia's logic of appropriateness recognising China's rulers bestowing legitimacy. Barring exceptions such as Ashikaga Yoshimitsu's 1404 investiture as 'King of Japan', Japan avoided, but did not openly challenge this logic. However, Japanese region-level actors' engagement with China recognised these narratives. Under the Ashikaga, both the Hosokawa and Ōuchi daimyō acknowledged Ming authority to access trade. This contradicted their lord–vassal relationship with the shōgun and generated conflict between them in Ningbo in 1523 over who had this authority, due to conflicting understandings of the Ming's hierarchically delegated narrative.[77] Such incidents forced Japanese recognition, as the Ming issued a letter to the Ashikaga threatening to sever trade and launch a punitive expedition if the culprits were not surrendered.[78] Furthermore, China and Korea invested the Ōuchi as 'King of Japan'. Their acceptance of investiture and efforts to move the emperor to Yamaguchi risked conflict with the Ashikaga. Consequently, Ōuchi retainers launched a coup in 1551 to prevent tensions boiling over due to the challenge posed to Ashikaga legitimation narratives.[79] While state-level actors avoided acknowledgement outside, region-level vassals recognised Chinese legitimation narratives undercutting their authority claims.

Demands on behaviour saw Japanese actors conform with maritime restrictions established by East Asian state-level actors outside. For example, Joseon incorporated region-level actors outside, contradicting their relationship to Japanese rulers. This undercut Japanocentric narratives expressed inside. The *munin* system established trade relations with western daimyō by investing them with a rank in Joseon's order in return for combating piracy. Indeed, the 1443 Gyehae Treaty and the 1609 Kiyu Treaty opening Korean ports were concluded with Tsushima and not Japan. Furthermore, the *hangwae* policy resettled pirates in Korea and provided land, houses, and wives. Narratives legitimising Joseon's policies towards Japanese actors adapted their approach towards the Jurchen and forced inferior status on Japanese actors.[80] Irrespective of belief, Japanese state- and region-level actors nevertheless complied with outside demands.

Compounding tensions in complying with demands was an inability to clearly undertake segmentation. This can be seen in the status of Tsushima and Ryukyu. Although Tsushima's liminal position between Japan and Korea was accepted, this did not prevent Japanese resentment towards Joseon's demands on behaviour and the legitimation narratives they confirmed outside. Joseon treated Tsushima as its territory – issuing 'domestic' travel permits and assigning civilian and military officials between 1418 and 1496.[81] Under the Tokugawa, Tsushima gave tribute to Joseon's king despite the shōgun requesting gifts be called *pongjin* and not *chinsang* to avoid recognising Joseon's

[75]Luke Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), pp. 6–7.

[76]Takeshi Ishida, 'Conflict and its accommodation: Omote-Ura and Uichi-Soto relations', in Ellis S. Krauss, Thomas P. Rohlen, and Patricia G. Steinhoff (eds), *Conflict in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1984), pp. 16–40 (pp. 16–8).

[77]Jurgis Elisonas, 'The inseparable trinity: Japan's relations with China and Korea', in John Whitney Hall (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 4: Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 235–300 (pp. 238–9).

[78]Kwan-Wai So, *Japanese Piracy in Ming China during the 16th Century* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1975), pp. 174–5.

[79]Thomas D. Conlan, *Kings in All But Name: The Lost History of Ōuchi Rule in Japan, 1350–1569* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), pp. 275, 311–13, 364–5.

[80]Kenneth R. Robinson, 'The Tsushima governor and regulation of Japanese access to Chosŏn in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries', *Korean Studies*, 20 (1996), pp. 23–50 (pp. 24–7); Etsuko Hae-jin Kang, *Diplomacy and Ideology in Japanese–Korean Relations: From the Fifteenth to Eighteenth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), pp. 54–5.

[81]Travis Seifman, 'Performing "lūchū": Identity performance and foreign relations in early modern Japan', PhD diss., University of California Santa Barbara (2019), p. 123; Kenneth R. Robinson, 'An island's place in history: Tsushima in Japan and in Chŏson, 1392–1592', *Korean Studies*, 30 (2006), pp. 40–66 (p. 49).

claims.[82] At its most extreme, Joseon invaded Tsushima in 1389 and 1419 to combat piracy.[83] Rather than acknowledging this challenge, the Ashikaga overlooked it and did not raise the issue with Korean envoys visiting in 1420.[84] Nevertheless, resentment over demands on behaviour could result in conflict. The Disturbance of the Three Ports in 1510 saw Tsushima (with tacit Japanese support) support Japanese rioters in Busan and Naeipo while Sō vessels ransacked Geojedo off Busan's coast in response to Joseon's threats to restrict trade.[85] Furthermore, between 1626 and 1824 Joseon recorded 19 cases of *nanchuel* ('disorderly exiting') where Japanese merchants openly defied movement controls and sparked riots.[86] Even Western imperialism exploited Tsushima's liminal status. Russian gunboat diplomacy in 1861 violated Japanese maritime restrictions to pressure Tsushima into becoming a protectorate. Ignoring East Asia's inside/outside dynamic, formalising Tsushima's status was symptomatic of wider efforts to undermine the shōgun's authority.[87] Such tensions reinforce the importance of segmentation to wider stability in the system.

Ryukyu's liminal position between Japan and China produced similar tensions. Tokugawa demands on behaviour hid their relationship with Ryukyu to ensure alignment with Chinese legitimation narratives.[88] China overlooked Japan's 1609 invasion since their existing tributary relationship continued. Nevertheless, Japanese thinkers feared overlap would result in conflict. Kumazawa Banzan's 17th-century essay *Daigaku wakumon* highlights this paranoia. It emphasises how the Manchus coming to power threatened conflict over Ryukyu. Similarly, Arai Hakuseki feared potential conflict with the Qing over Ryukyu even in the 18th century.[89] Consequently, Japan put in concerted efforts to ensure conflicting legitimation narratives were not performed simultaneously. Sumptuary laws forbade Japanese customs and saw guidebooks issued to Ryukyuan travellers to deflect questions on their relationship to Japan. As the presence of Chinese envoys in Ryukyu was a problem due to its liminal status, Japan altered performances when Chinese envoys were present. Guidelines instructed Japanese officials to hide in the village of Gusukuma. If envoys asked to see Gusukuma, a contingency plan saw the neighbouring village of Makiminato passed off as Gusukuma, reconfirming Japanese anxieties.[90] As travel from Japan to Ryukyu took six months, awareness of contradictions was minimised.[91] Finally, Ryukyu's liminal status was seized upon by America when seeking to open Japan. Following the Perry Expedition's ultimatum in 1853, the Americans consciously violated Japanese maritime restrictions and took residence in Ryukyu. Such an act was a calculated challenge to Tokugawa authority. Compounding this was a compact signed with the United States openly contradicting Ryukyu's established relationships with both Japan and China.[92] Japanese anxieties and the efforts undertaken to hide their relationship with Ryukyu reinforce how segmentation ensured legitimation narratives did not produce tension.

[82]Lee, 'Chŏson Korea as Sojunghwa', p. 307; James B. Lewis, *Frontier Contact between Chŏson Korea and Tokugawa Japan* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 26–7.

[83]Barbara Seyock, 'Pirates and traders on Tsushima Island during the late 14th to the early 16th century: As seen from historical and archaeological perspectives', in Angela Schottenhammer (ed.), *Trade and Transfer across the East Asian 'Mediterranean'*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), pp. 91–124 (pp. 96–7).

[84]Tomomi J. Emoto, 'Border historicity and ethnographic rupture: Pirates, Korean kings and borderlanders in transnational Tsushima Island, Japan', *History and Anthropology*, 29:4 (2018), pp. 425–45 (pp. 436–7).

[85]Elisonas, 'The inseparable trinity', pp. 247–8.

[86]Lewis, *Frontier Contact*, pp. 177–90.

[87]Viktor Shmagin, 'They fear us, yet cling to us: Russian negotiations with Tsushima officials during the 1861 Tsushima incident', *The International History Review*, 39:3 (2017), pp. 521–45.

[88]Robert Sakai, 'The Satsuma-Ryukyu trade and the Tokugawa seclusion policy', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 23:3 (1964), pp. 391–403 (p. 392).

[89]Gregory Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu: Identity and Ideology in Early-Modern Thought and Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017), pp. 20–1.

[90]Yuan Jiadong, 'Satsuma's invasion of the Ryukyu Kingdom and changes in the geopolitical structure of East Asia', *Social Sciences in China*, 34:4 (2013), pp. 118–38 (p. 126); Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, pp. 18–20, 44–6.

[91]George M. McCune, 'The exchange of envoys between Korea and Japan during the Tokugawa period', *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 5:3 (1946), pp. 308–25 (pp. 310–12).

[92]George Kerr, *Okinawa: A History of an Island People* (Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2000), pp. 297–41.

Inside, Japanese state-level actors performed autonomous legitimation narratives. Under the Tokugawa, both internal and external actors acknowledged the logic of appropriateness recognising their status as *taikun* ('great prince'). This represented 'a declaration of independence' from the Sinocentric order by removing connotations of investiture.[93] For example, while the *Gyorin* ('Neighbourly Relations') policy established formal equality, in practice the *Joseon tongsinsa* ('Goodwill missions') performed as tributary missions.[94] Korean envoys expressed considerable resentment at recognising Japan's logic of appropriateness inside. Joseon protested this treatment during the 1711 and 1719 missions as they considered these transgressions to demonstrate Japanese 'barbarism'.[95] Consequently, performing Japan's legitimation narrative was tolerated, as to the wider system it occurred on the periphery.

Demands on behaviour controlled foreign interactions inside and compelled performances recognising autonomous legitimation narratives. *Sakoku* maritime restrictions limited foreign interactions to 'Four Gateways'.[96] Chinese traders and the Dutch operated in Nagasaki, the Matsumae clan controlled the Ainu in Ezo (Hokkaidō), the Sō clan of Tsushima managed Korean relations, while the Shimazu clan ruling Satsuma controlled Ryukyu. For these region-level actors, their relationships were formally legitimised as delegated authority from the shōgun. Trade under the Tokugawa required carrying a *shinpai* ('trading licence'). This recognised Tokugawa authority claims and usurped the prerogative of China's emperor despite protests by Chinese traders.[97] Similarly, Dutch traders were presented before the shōgun as 'barbarians' and humiliatingly ordered to dance, sing, speak Japanese, and wear Dutch clothing for his amusement.[98] Such demands on behaviour situated Japanese rulers at the apex of their own hierarchy inside and recognised their legitimation narratives in practice.

Outside, interactions occurring at the region level restrained daimyō performing autonomous legitimation narratives. The logic of appropriateness established a lord–vassal relationship reconfirming daimyō authority as delegated from the shōgun. 'Rule by status' stratified daimyō into different ranks. While affording respect, this 'container society' nevertheless sought to eliminate alternative rankings.[99] Rank was conveyed through *sankin kotai* wherein the shōgun marshalled vassals to perform legitimation narratives through elaborate parades.[100] Such acts imposed material costs as performances on alternate years consumed 50 to 75 per cent of daimyō income and limited autonomy.[101] Thus, daimyō autonomy was recast as a delegation of authority from the shōgun by performing these legitimation narratives.

Demands on behaviour established interaction rituals and sumptuary laws compelling recognition of shogunal authority by daimyō. This arose from experiences of Portugal exploiting Japanese instability during the Sengoku period. Here, missionary activity accompanied arms sales to daimyō

[93]Ronald Toby, 'Reopening the question of Sakoku: Diplomacy in the legitimation of the Tokugawa Bakufu', *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 3:2 (1977), pp. 323–63 (p. 352).

[94]Ronald P. Toby, 'Carnival of aliens: Korean embassies in Edo-period art and popular culture', *Monumenta Nipponica*, 41:4 (1986), pp. 415–56 (pp. 447–8).

[95]Ronald Toby, *Korean–Japanese Diplomacy in 1711: Sukchong's Court and the Shogun's Title* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Nam-lin Hur, 'A Korean envoy encounters Tokugawa Japan: Shin Yuhan and the Korean embassy of 1719', *Bunmei* 21:3 (2000), pp. 61–73; Lee, 'Chŏson Korea as Sojunghwa', pp. 306–8.

[96]Although a Japanese term, *sakoku* was first conceived of as a system ordering foreign relations when Shizuku Tadao translated the German physician Engelbert Kaempfer's *History of Japan* (1727) back into Japanese as *Sakoku ron* in 1801.

[97]Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, pp. 197–201.

[98]Shogo Suzuki, 'Europe at the periphery of the Japanese world order', in Shogo Suzuki, Yongjin Zhang, and Joel Quirk (eds), *International Orders in the Early Modern World: Before the Rise of the West* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 76–93 (p. 88).

[99]John W. Hall, 'Rule by status in Tokugawa Japan', *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 1:1 (1974), pp. 39–49.

[100]Constantine N. Vaporis, 'Lordly pageantry: The Daimyo procession and political authority', *Japan Review*, 17 (2005), pp. 3–54 (pp. 3–5).

[101]Harold Bolitho, 'The *han*', in John Whitney Hall (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 4: Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 194–5; Constantine N. Vaporis, *Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), pp. 2–3.

and opened the door to a trade in Japanese slaves in the absence of central authority.[102] Therefore, demands on behaviour reduced conditions for conflict. For example, the *buke shohatto* (Laws of the Military Households) established in 1615 preceded the *sakoku* edicts and prohibited innovations or extensions of castles and contact with other daimyō. Sumptuary laws dictated clothing and conduct and required all marriages among daimyō and retainers to be public.[103] These edicts limited performances of conflicting legitimation narratives by daimyō. Furthermore, movement was controlled through several highways known as the 'Five Routes' (Gokaidō). Travel required formally acknowledging shogunal authority claims to circumnavigate barriers (*sekisho*), even if restrictions proved nominal in practice, and banned daimyō access to symbolic sites such as Kyoto.[104] Restricting the autonomy of region-level actors limited conflicting legitimation narratives.

Inside, region-level actors performed legitimation narratives independent of their lord–vassal relationship. The logic of appropriateness daimyō established inside their domain asserted parity to the shōgun. Terms such as *kōgi-sama* denoting head of government, *kimi* ('prince'), *seikun* ('divine prince'), and *taiju* ('great general') alongside deification were employed. Despite being reserved for the shogun, daimyō used these to construct autonomous legitimation narratives.[105] Alternative ranks threated shogunal legitimation narratives and risked conflict. Tokugawa Ieyasu resorted to force to destroy Hideyoshi's heir, Toyotomi Hideyori, in 1615 as his court rank of *naidaijin* ('inner minister') maintained the prerogative to appoint officials through autonomous legitimation narratives, creating a rival powerbase in Osaka.[106] Such incidents reinforce segmentation's importance in making it easier to overlook contradictions. For example, in 1792 the Tokugawa Grand Inspector determined if daimyō Miyake Yasukuni was competent in selecting his younger brother as heir. Approving this decision, the shōgun not long after received news Miyake had passed. Yet internal documents of Tahara domain record Yasukuni passing 55 days earlier than the provided date. As hundreds of retainers stood to lose their position if no heir existed, which risked wider social disruption, collaboration with the shōgun deliberately hid these discrepancies.[107]

Demands on behaviour saw daimyō emulate the shogunate to enforce recognition of their legitimation narratives inside. Conceptualising the Tokugawa order as a 'compound state' highlights 'the status of large domains as small states within a broader state-system'.[108] Dividing the country into *han* ('domain') ruled by daimyō, their number fluctuated before stabilising around 260.[109] Daimyō ruled three-quarters of Japan directly, replicating most features of governance including mobilising armies and police (albeit under the restrictions of *buke shohatto*) and establishing legal codes and currency.[110] While the shogunate arbitrated boundary disputes and delegated authority to resolve such issues by establishing guidelines, this legitimised existing practice on the ground

[102] John W. Hall, Nagahara Keiji, and Kozo Yamamura, 'Introduction', in John W. Hall, Nagahara Keiji, and Kozo Yamamura (eds), *Japan before Tokugawa: Political Consolidation and Economic Growth, 1500–1650* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 7–9; Lúcio De Sousa, *The Portuguese Slave Trade in Early Modern Japan: Merchants, Jesuits and Japanese, Chinese, and Korean Slaves* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); Michael Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan: Gift Giving and Diplomacy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), p. 7.

[103] 'Code for the Warrior Households (*Buke Shohatto*)' in Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur E. Tiedemann (eds), *Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume 2, 1600–2000*, 2nd ed. (New York: Colombia University Press, 2006), pp. 12–4.

[104] Constantine N. Vaporis, 'Linking the realm: The Gokaidō highway network in early modern Japan', in Susan Alcock, John Bodel, and Richard Talbert (eds), *Highways, Byways, and Road Systems in the Pre-Modern World* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 90–105 (pp. 90–4); Vaporis, *Tour of Duty*, p. 51.

[105] Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace*, pp. 37–42.

[106] John Whitney Hall, 'The *Bakuhan* system', in John Whitney Hall (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 4: Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 145–7.

[107] Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace*, pp. 1–2.

[108] Mark Ravina, *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 27.

[109] 'Han', in Gen Itasaka (ed.), *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan, Volume 3* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), p. 92.

[110] Ravina, *Land and Lordship*, pp. 16–9.

which daimyō undertook in reference to their own legitimation narratives.[111] Such efforts extended into the wider system. The Matsumae clan ruling Ezo incorporated the Ainu on their terms.[112] This demonstrates regional-level actors justifying demands inside through their own legitimation narratives.

Vietnam

An inside/outside dynamic existed throughout early modern Vietnam. Despite protracted conflicts, state-level actors such as the Lê, Mạc, Tây Sơn, and Nguyễn dynasty alongside region-level actors such as the Trịnh lords undertook segmentation. Contextual understandings of identity existed within Vietnamese political thinking. Defining themselves vis-à-vis China, Vietnamese historiography focused on establishing 'our kingdom' (*ngă quôc*) 'and the erection of boundaries, real or mythological, between China and Vietnam'.[113] As Kosal Path identifies:

> Vietnamese rulers perfected the historically and culturally informed practice of obedience in face but betrayal in mind when dealing with the Chinese emperor – that is, Vietnam kowtowing to imperial China to satisfy the Chinese sense of superiority, but consciously grasping every opportunity to resist Chinese influence to preserve its national identity and independence.[114]

These distinct identities reflected the prevailing logic of appropriateness within a space. No 'semantic rigidity' existed as Vietnam took the name 'Annan' (Settled South) during interactions outside in China and 'Đại Việt' (among other names) during interactions with others inside their boundaries.[115] Indeed, the concept of *trong đê ngoâi vương* or 'emperor at home, king abroad' captured its ability to maintain dual understandings.[116]

Outside, Vietnamese dynasties acknowledged legitimation narratives conveying authority to be delegated from China at the state level. The logic of appropriateness remained unambiguous – the Chinese emperor legitimised Vietnam's ruler by investing them as 'king'. This suited China, as recognising its symbolic claims proved easier than directly intervening due to Vietnam's distance. Indeed, the uplands of Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi formed a 'great hilly barrier' to Chinese expansion into Vietnam.[117] Nevertheless, this did not preclude Chinese interventions into Vietnamese dynastic succession, as overthrowing an invested regime contradicted hierarchical legitimation narratives. Indeed, the Song–Đại Cồ Việt War (981), Song–Đại Việt War (1075–7), Ming–Đại Ngu War (1406–7), and the Qing intervention (1788–9) centred on China's belief in their right to intercede in light of the challenge posed by Vietnam's autonomous legitimation narratives. The catalyst for the Ming invasion was driven by the overthrow of the Trần dynasty by the Hồ. While initially hidden from the Ming, its discovery challenged narratives that China invested rulers of Vietnam.[118] Driven by 'unconvincing rhetoric' around Vietnamese claims to independence,

[111] Mukoyama, 'The Eastern cousins of European sovereign states?', pp. 16–20.

[112] Brett L. Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 23–55; David L. Howell, 'Ainu ethnicity and the boundaries of the early modern Japanese state', *Past & Present*, 142:1 (1994), pp. 69–93 (pp. 78–9, 85–6).

[113] Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, p. 60.

[114] Kosal Path, 'The duality of Vietnam's deference and resistance to China', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 29:3 (2018), pp. 499–521 (pp. 506–7).

[115] Liam C. Kelley, *Beyond the Bronze Pillars: Envoy Poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese Relationship* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), pp. 23–8.

[116] Alexander Vuving, 'Operated by world views and interfaced by world orders: Traditional and modern Sino-Vietnamese relations', in Anthony Reid and Zheng Yangwen (eds), *Negotiating Asymmetry: China's Place in East Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), pp. 73–92 (pp. 81–2).

[117] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, p. 139.

[118] John K. Whitmore, *Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming: 1371–1421* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 80–1.

Ming attempts at cultural assimilation for 20 years following invasion proved unsuccessful.[119] Similarly, Qing intervention against the Tây Sơn dynasty from 1788 to 1789 was driven in part to restore the Lê, who had been previously invested.[120] Despite conflicts erupting over challenges to their legitimation narratives, limits posed by low interaction capacity meant segmentation and symbolic recognition of Chinese claims outside provided a more durable basis for a relationship.

Demands on behaviour saw Vietnamese dynasties comply with Chinese pressures to recognise their legitimation narrative outside due to asymmetrical capabilities. Chinese emperors retained the prerogative to alter the terms of investiture and assign a status compromising Vietnam's ability to legitimise authority on their terms inside. For example, the investiture of Mạc Đăng Dung as Vietnam's ruler in 1540 was not as 'king', but rather it was a surrender ceremony. As the Mạc had overthrown the Lê dynasty, their usurpation challenged Chinese authority claims. Its performance denied Vietnam's independence outside, reclassifying it as a *dutongshisi* (native chieftaincy) with its ruler becoming 'Pacification Commander' below their previous rank.[121] When the Lê returned to power in 1596, the title of Pacification Commander was retained despite entreaties to be recognised as kings. Furthermore, the Ming continued to invest the remnant Mạc, further undermining Lê claims to rule Vietnam.[122] Chinese demands on Vietnam at the state level not only centred their legitimation narratives but sought to undercut Vietnamese claims to autonomy.

Inside, Vietnam performed autonomous legitimation narratives. The logic of appropriateness recognised Vietnamese rulers as emperor, establishing equality with China and superiority to Southeast Asia. Equality between 'north' and 'south' emphasised shared descent from the same civilisation rather than a belief Vietnam broke away from China.[123] Indeed, China 'did not reckon on spawning a sovereign southern emperor who challenged … exclusive cosmological control of All-Under-Heaven'.[124] For example, Vietnam contradicted China by usurping their prerogative to name countries upon investiture. Following the Nguyễn dynasty's establishment in 1802, 'Việt Nam' was selected as its name. Nevertheless, the Qing described Vietnam as 'Annan', while the Nguyễn renamed themselves 'Đại Việt' in 1812 before changing to 'Đại Nam Quôc' (Great Southern Country) in 1838.[125] These acts highlight Vietnam's construction of an autonomous legitimation narrative despite knowingly contradicting prevailing Chinese understandings.

Demands on behaviour compelled performances recognising Vietnamese legitimation narratives inside. While never rejecting investiture, Vietnam altered protocols inside. Investiture ceremonies occurred on an East–West rather than North–South axis, befitting equals rather than subordinates.[126] Beyond China, maritime restrictions ensured interactions aligned with Vietnamese authority claims. Within the Lê Code, the port village of Vân Đồn, located on islands beyond Hạ Long Bay, represented a 'gateway' while banning private trade and curtailing movement

[119]Keith Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 180, 189; John K. Whitmore, 'Chiao-Chih and Neo-Confucianism: The Ming attempt to transform Vietnam', *Ming Studies*, 1 (1977), pp. 51–92 (p. 65); Alexander Ong Eng An, 'Contextualising the book-burning episode during the Ming invasion and occupation of Vietnam', in Geoff Wade and Sun Laichen (eds), *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China Factor* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010), pp. 154–65 (pp. 155, 158–61).

[120]Peter Perdue, 'Embracing victory, effacing defeat: Rewriting the Qing frontier campaigns', in Diana Larry (ed.), *The Chinese State at the Borders* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), pp. 105–25.

[121]Kathlene Baldanza, 'Perspectives on the 1540 Mac surrender to the Ming', *Asia Major*, 27:2 (2014), pp. 115–46 (pp. 116–17).

[122]Baldanza, *Ming China and Vietnam*, p. 179.

[123]Kelley, *Beyond the Bronze Pillars*, pp. 31–6.

[124]Baldanza, *Ming China and Vietnam*, p. 110.

[125]Baldanza, *Ming China and Vietnam*, pp. 1–4; Insun Yu, 'Vietnam–China relations in the 19th century: Myth and reality of the tributary system', *Journal of Northeast Asian History*, 6:1 (2009), pp. 81–117 (p. 103); Choi Byung Wook, *Southern Vietnam under the Reign of Minh Mang (1820–1841): Central Policies and Local Response* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 131–3.

[126]Vuving, 'Operated by world views', pp. 81–2.

by foreign vessels.[127] Interactions with Southeast Asia and Europe forced performances recognising the Vietnamese emperor's authority claims.[128] These controls extended to entry and conduct inside. With the rise of the Qing, Ming loyalists fleeing to Vietnam known as the Minh Hương were incorporated. Here, they were allowed to maintain customs and practices including veneration of Ming emperors which challenged Qing authority claims.[129] Likewise, sumptuary laws existed as a condition of entry for Qing traders, who were forced to adopt Vietnamese hairstyles and clothing inside as Manchu dress and the queue hairstyle required in China were considered 'barbaric'.[130] These demands contradicted Qing pretensions to universal authority expressed in hierarchically delegated narratives outside. Controlling movement allowed Vietnamese dynasties to engage in segmentation and perform autonomous legitimation narratives.

Outside, region-level actors in Vietnam engaged ruling dynasties in line with their legitimation narratives despite often holding greater power. Despite effectively operating as polities, accommodating state-level actors was the path of least resistance. Here, the logic of appropriateness saw strongmen appropriate governing institutions to legitimise their position. This is best demonstrated by the Trịnh lords exercising de facto control over northern Vietnam while performing their authority through hierarchically delegated narratives centring the Lê. Broad parallels can be drawn with Japan, as the Trịnh title *nguyên soâi* (generalissimo) was comparable to shōgun.[131] Similarly, they employed the title of king to portray themselves as servants of the Lê emperor.[132] Nevertheless, the Trịnh were not restricted to Vietnam and engaged the wider system. Relations with China saw Trịnh Tráng receive the title 'Assistant King of Annan' from the Ming in 1651 placing them as equals to the Lê outside.[133] Considering Trịnh power superseded the Lê's, acceptance of this logic of appropriateness mitigated tensions by recognising Lê legitimation narratives.

Demands on behaviour placed minimal restrictions on region-level actors beyond formal recognition of the reigning Vietnamese dynasty's legitimation narrative. In pursuing war with the Nguyễn, Trịnh justification rested on claims of disloyalty to the Lê.[134] Conflict between the Trịnh and Nguyễn recurred across the 17th and 18th centuries. Low interaction capacity due to Vietnam's hilly geography produced a stalemate, allowing conflicting legitimation narratives to endure through segmentation.[135] Nguyễn trade with the Portuguese provided access to firearms and cannons while geography favoured the defender.[136] Nevertheless, an inability to fully prosecute this conflict fully did not preclude efforts to force Nguyễn compliance. Furthermore, the Trịnh established their own maritime restrictions, allowing a Dutch entrepôt at Phố Hiến (present-day Hưng Yên) in 1637 and banning Christian missionaries in 1663.[137] Despite their actions often being a *fait accompli*, both continued formally acknowledging their authority deriving from the Lê outside. The wider system tolerated Trịnh demands as they performed in line with legitimation narratives recognising its authority as delegated.

Inside, distance enabled Vietnamese actors at the region level to construct autonomous legitimation narratives. The Nguyễn ruling southern Vietnam from the 16th to 18th century highlights this dynamic. Here, its logic of appropriateness drew on local contexts and alternative ideologies to

[127]'Laws on Foreign Commerce (Fifteenth Century)' in George Dutton, Jayne Werner, and John Whitmore (eds), *Sources of Vietnamese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 101–3.

[128]Yu, 'Vietnam–China relations in the 19th century', pp. 109–12.

[129]Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, pp. 115–16.

[130]Yu, 'Vietnam–China relations in the 19th century', p. 105.

[131]Ben Kiernan, *Việt Nam: A History from Earliest Times to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 229.

[132]Keith W. Taylor, 'Nguyen Hoang and the beginning of Vietnam's southward expansion', in Anthony Reid (ed.), *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 42–68 (p. 55).

[133]Baldanza, *Ming China and Vietnam*, pp. 195–6.

[134]Trinh Can, 'Edict to the peoples of Quang Nam', in George E. Dutton, Jayne S. Werner, and John K. Whitmore (eds), *Sources of Vietnamese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 159–61 (p. 159).

[135]Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, p. 163.

[136]Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese*, pp. 258–318.

[137]Woodside, *Vietnam and the China Model*, pp. 261–2.

construct a narrative at odds with relationships outside. Removed from the 'traditional definition of "good Vietnamese"', they explored other possible identities.[138] Expressing themselves as an independent polity called Đàng Trong (Inner Land), they emulated Southeast Asian kingship rather than Confucianism to construct autonomous legitimation narratives. From 1744, rulers styled themselves *Thiên vương* (king of heaven), having previously employed *Chúa Bụt* or *Phật Chúa* (Buddhist Lord). Embracing Buddhism and incorporating local cults, the Nguyễn situated themselves in pre-existing southern religious practices. Similarly, despite relying predominantly on their relationship to the Lê, the Trịnh also sought to legitimise their authority by patronising Buddhist temples.[139] Here, autonomous legitimation narratives were performed without consideration of relationships to Vietnam's emperor.

Demands on behaviour compelled actors to recognise the legitimation narratives of region-level actors inside. Đàng Trong established maritime controls to secure recognition of their authority claims. The Nguyễn opened Hội An to foreign trade in 1614 and banned Christianity in 1631, both in advance of comparable moves by the Trịnh.[140] Indeed, Nguyễn capacity evolved from military rule as minimal administrative capacity evolved into more robust civil government. Emulating northern institutions, the Nguyễn Review and Selection System (*Duyệt tuyển*) allowed them to survey and categorise their population. Rendering these populations visible, it allowed them to justify taxation and conscription based on their autonomous legitimation narratives.[141] As such actions could not be opposed, segmentation offered a cost-effective means to overlook contradictory legitimation narratives conveyed by demands on behaviour inside.

Conclusion

My article demonstrates spatial organisation playing a central role in managing conflicting legitimation narratives in early modern East Asia. By legitimising authority contextually, resulting tensions could be managed without resolution. IR has identified that, while prevailing legitimation narratives understood authority as hierarchically delegated, numerous actors autonomously produced their own narratives contradicting these claims. Furthermore, conflicting legitimation narratives were not only constructed by state-level actors but also region-level actors operating in the same system. All employed spatial practices to maintain their own legitimation narratives within. This process, termed the segmentation of space established an inside/outside dynamic as actors engaged the wider system in a manner at odds with their self-perception. Actors established spaces with distinct logics of appropriateness and established demands on behaviour compelling recognition of legitimation narratives. Emulation by Japanese and Vietnamese actors highlights segmentation's centrality to ensuring stability.

More broadly, it speaks to the perennial challenge of conflicting understandings over where legitimate authority resides. Considering the tensions conflicting legitimation narratives generate, early modern East Asia provides an example of contradictions enduring over an extended period without convergence on a shared understanding. This departs from the current international system wherein the state seeks to eliminate other actors from engaging in spatial organisation in both theory and practice. It outlines how segmentation allowed conflicting legitimation narratives to exist in distinct spaces. By keeping them at a distance by dictating when, where, and how movement occurred, it showed shared understandings were not a precondition for stability. While contradictions are well established, early modern East Asia provides an example of how tensions could

[138]Taylor, 'Nguyen Hoang', p. 64.

[139]Nola Cooke, 'Nineteenth-century Vietnamese Confucianization in historical perspective: Evidence from the Palace Examinations (1463–1883)', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 25:2 (1994), pp. 270–312 (p. 295).

[140]Woodside, *Vietnam and the China Model*, pp. 261–2.

[141]Nola Cooke, 'Regionalism and the nature of Nguyen rule in seventeenth-century Dang Trong (Cochinchina)', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 29:1 (1998), pp. 122–61; Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina*, pp. 37–8; Kelley, 'Taxation and military conscription in early modern Vietnam', p. 10.

be managed over the long term. Indeed, where segmentation broke down, conflict was likelier to arise.

Highlighting the importance of spatial organisation in early modern East Asia offers two avenues for future research. First, reconciling delegated and autonomous legitimation narratives in early modern East Asia helps reevaluate the basis for order in this period. Further research can demonstrate the importance of spatiality as an organising principle by exploring how other actors such as those at the village level managed interactions despite having conflicting legitimation narratives. Similarly, while touched on briefly, the importance of spatiality to stability is demonstrated in the extent Western (and later Japanese and Chinese) actors undercut East Asia's inside/outside dynamic to pursue their imperial goals in the 19th century. Second, the role of spatial organisation in managing conflicting legitimation narratives should be developed beyond this case study. A comparison with the *Zweikaiserproblem* offers an opportunity to explore why spatial organisation did not manage conflicting legitimation narratives in medieval Europe, considering their open acknowledgement. Similarly, examining how spatial organisation manages conflicting legitimation narratives today where this ability is formally monopolised by states allows us to measure the extent to which segmentation is possible in a globalised world. Moving beyond historical East Asia allows us to determine which aspects of segmentation travel beyond the region and which are unique to this context.

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